

Feb 21, 1953
Princeton, Iowa

Dear Miss Hage,

In school we are making career books and have to have either a personal interview or a written interview. Not being able to get to Eldridge to see you, I would like to know if you would answer a few questions on the subject of how you came to be a librarian.

How did you come to choose the career of a librarian?

What training did you receive and where?

What are your duties in a typical day as a librarian?

We have to have this interview before Wednesday, so I would appreciate this information. Thank you.

Yours Truly,
Sheryl Huston

Princeton

February 24, 1953

Miss Sheryl Huston
Princeton, Iowa

Dear Sheryl,

This letter isn't going to reach you before the deadline of your scrapbook, I'm afraid; we had no mail here in Eldridge yesterday, so I didn't get your letter of February 21 until this morning. However, here are the answers to the questions you asked.

I grew up in a small town where there was no library. I knew what libraries had to offer, however, because I had an aunt who was the head librarian of a city library and whenever we visited that city I visited the public library. I don't believe anyone ever tried to influence me in the choice of my career - not even the librarian aunt. Through association with her and the books she gave our family upon any and every occasion I came to know and like books and something of the library profession. When I finished high school I went to live with that aunt and work as an apprentice in the library to see if I really did like the work well enough to go into it as a profession. I did. When, at library school, I learned for the first time about county libraries, I thought, "that's for me." Remembering our own small town without a library, I was impressed with the possibility of small towns having libraries through the cooperation of the whole county. Incidentally, that small town in which I grew up, is a part of the county library system there now. I have always liked people and books, and the library profession looked to me to be a very satisfactory way of bringing them together and satisfying my liking for both.

I received my BA degree with a major in history and a minor in English at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. I took my library training at the Library School of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wisconsin. It is a one year course.

Your question about the typical duties in a typical day if applied here at the Scott County Library gives me pause. We - or I should say I - have no typical day. That, I'll admit is because I am the administrator of the library. I may have a day carefully planned and after the first hour of it the plans go by the boards for a salesman may come in; a telephone call may require my going out, perhaps even for the rest of the day. However, the work I do in this library which is a small one and not departmentalized to any extent, includes ordering the books, - this process involves checking catalogs, lists, and reviews, and is quite time consuming - checking the orders against the invoices and the shipments of books when they arrive, keeping of records pertaining to acquisitions and discards, all the correspondence connected with the business, all the buying of supplies; planning and overseeing the general work of the rest of the staff, filling out questionnaires and surveys which come to the library, writing publicity, speaking before various groups, and trying to keep everybody happy! Obviously all these things can't all be done everyday - nor is there need for all of them everyday; so you see, there is no typical day in my life - and I might add that there are days when I say a fervent thank God that there aren't! I'd hate to think of some of my days repeating themselves - ever - much less often enough to become typical!

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Now a cataloger's day is more typical. Her responsibility is chiefly concerned with determining the classification of the new books, checking the authority of the author's names, applying subject headings to the books, overseeing the work of the typist who types the catalog cards, revising all the typists work, and in the case of this library the cataloger happens to do the marking of the backs of the books, too. The division of labor is not so great in a small library as in a large one, but the work all has to be done, so each person does more kinds of the work than she would in a larger place. To me that is one of the distinct advantages of a small library - nothing ever becomes monotonous - there's too much variety for that ever to happen. Our cataloger also has charge of registration of borrowers and filling requests and reserves.

The bookmobile librarian is on the bookmobile everyday it is out. She has to find books to fill her requests on the bookmobile before they go out every day - or when they come in she does it for the next day's run. She keeps her own circulation count and files. That takes care of her days and weeks, believe me!

Our cataloger also keeps the circulation book for the whole system.

I neglected to mention among my duties those of preparing the bills for payment and the preparing monthly reports for the board meetings.

I believe that takes care of the questions you asked in your letter. I'm sorry I have been unable to send you the vocational material your mother requested last Friday. Our material was out. I'm mailing a book today, however, to your mother which has a chapter on librarians.

Perhaps I can give you some information you need but haven't been able to get elsewhere. About salaries, for instance. In recent years librarian's salaries have improved a great deal. A person coming out of library school - with a BA behind him - can get a minimum of \$3000.00 a year with no experience in the field. Most library jobs now offer a month's vacation with pay; sick leave at the rate of one day a month which cumulates up to and including 3 years usually - some libraries allow longer; some sort of retirement plan. And there is a tremendous scarcity of librarians for all the jobs available. The work week is usually 39 or 40 hours a week. There is evening work involved - usually a couple evenings a week. There is at least a half day off each week - many libraries and the trend is in that direction - give a whole day off each week.

All in all it's a mighty fine profession offering a fine variety of very interesting work. But don't let anyone try to tell you that it's "such nice clean work - all you have to do is sit and read books all day long"! Believe me! I've done a variety of kinds of work in my day, but nothing that has ever contributed more dirt to my hands, face, and even clothes upon occasion! And we hardly have time to read the reviews - much less the books themselves! That's all done on our own time - and unless one is willing - nay eager - to do a lot of reading on her own she'll not make a good librarian.

I hope that you are seriously considering the library field as your vocation. We need recruits!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth B. Hage
Librarian